

**HOW WILL RURAL MEDIUM-SIZE POLICE DEPARTMENTS
DEVELOP LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN THEIR POLICE
EXECUTIVES BY THE YEAR 2006?
ON BECOMING A DINOSAUR!**

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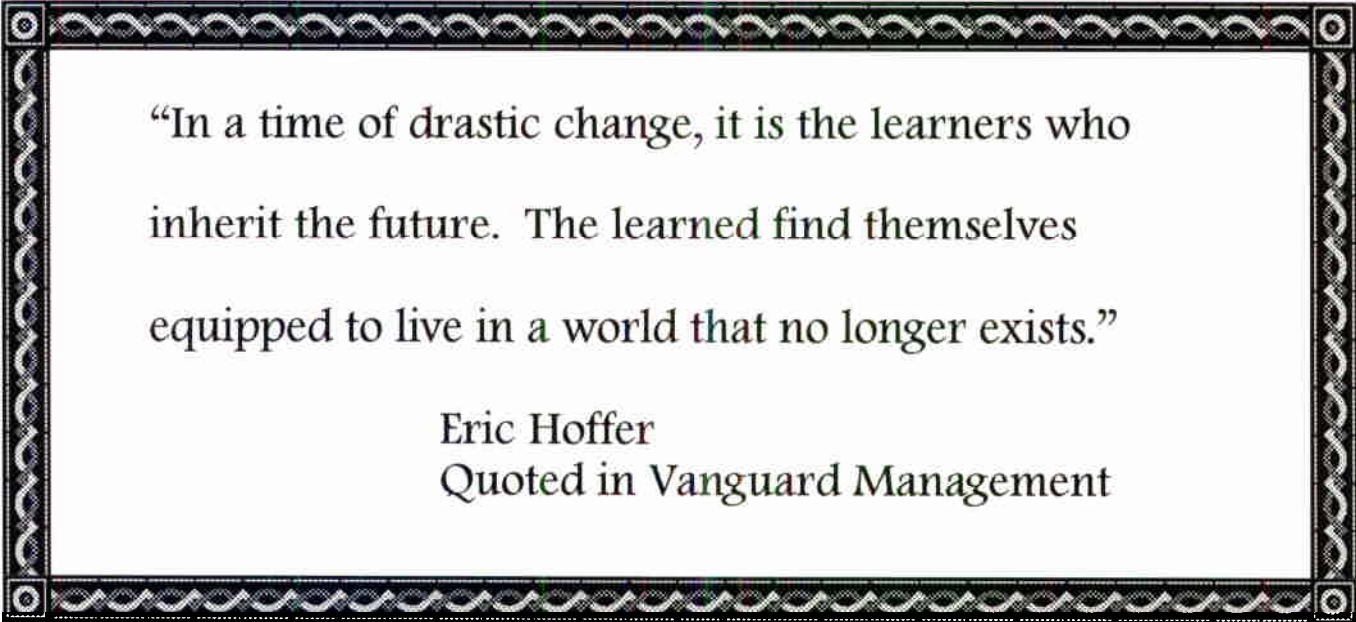
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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future -- creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).



“In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.”

Eric Hoffer
Quoted in Vanguard Management

INTRODUCTION

In the annals of municipal government, the police executive has always been a unique public official. The closest thing to a military commander in civilian life, they have historically been a strong and decisive leader. Operating in a paramilitary environment breeds traditionalism and isolationism which can limit the progress of any organization. Law enforcement traditionalism can be seen in its policies and procedures, its "attitude," and its hierarchical style of management. With the tremendous changes occurring in society, traditional approaches to management and leadership are not going to succeed. The traditional manager who solely relies upon the "old paradigm" to get the job done will feel threatened by the prospect of giving up power to have control.¹

It is fair to say that the world is full of chaos and is difficult to manage and control. The changes in the last generation have been so radical that it seems no one can keep pace with a game where the rules are forever changing and the game continually becomes a new one. The only thing in the future that is certain and predictable is "change." As Toffler notes in *The Adaptive Corporation*, "It is always easier to talk about change than make it." Management of change requires the conversion of what "could be" into what "may be" in pursuit of what "should be." Determining what "should be" calls for the discipline of futures research.²

In law enforcement management circles few would argue that: the public community is demanding more and more accountability; the media will influence the police operation; the work force will include more women and minorities; technological

advances are changing the job of a police officer, and; creating and/or maintaining a "safe community environment" will be the goal of tomorrow's police executive.³

In today's environment, virtually all organizations value the need to down size or right size. Because of limited resources, the small to medium size rural police department, face greater impacts. Reduction of personnel on rural police departments has a more devastating and far reaching effect on their ability to provide and/or maintain adequate police services. With the increasing population flight from urban communities to rural communities, the level of calls for service are increasing at a rate which are already overwhelming existing police resources. During these difficult times the skills and the abilities of the police leader become all that more critical as the health and moral character of the community depend upon them.

POLICING AND LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Law enforcement in the United States will undergo dramatic change by the year 2000. Rapid societal change is producing tremendous social pressures that threaten to cause significant community problems unless addressed.⁴ Police planning and futures research have to be conducted with purpose and direction. Law enforcement must anticipate tomorrow in an imaginative, analytical, and prescriptive manner. Law enforcement has relied too heavily on experience and not enough on innovation. Therefore, it is up to law enforcement to develop its own future-oriented education and training programs.⁵

Now is the time for law enforcement to shape its future. There is no one future out there, but many possible futures. Forecasting holds no magic answers, offers no

quick-fix solutions, and makes no guarantees. It does, however, offer law enforcement leaders the opportunity to step forward, share in the responsibility, and "take charge."⁶

How will rural communities develop such leaders? What type of training programs will need to be developed? The question of leadership development is often discussed and virtually everyone has an opinion about what constitutes effective leadership and what it takes to be an effective leader. In rural policing communities everyone is generally in agreement that the need for leadership has never been so great. In *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, Bennis and Nanus argue that today and tomorrow's leaders face increasingly complex and rapidly changing challenges. Tomorrow's rural police executive will face a broader spectrum of challenges in the forms of substance abuse, gangs, cultural diversity, the homeless, environmental pollution, health reform and the complexity of the information age.⁷

Today, difficult times will offer tomorrow's rural police executive opportunities for innovation and imagination. Before the transformation from law enforcement "managers" to law enforcement "leaders" can take place, there needs to be an understanding. In an effort to address these concerns, a group of experts representing a cross section from both the public and private sectors was convened to identify significant trends which might impact the shaping of tomorrow's rural police practices. By paying particular attention to the level of impact that each trend has on any rural community, strategic plans and/or policy considerations can be developed by the police executive. The following are several of the key trends that were identified by

the group as being important to this study:

- ◆ The level of cultural diversity in most rural communities will increase significantly over the next 10 years. There will be a need to find effective ways of reaching out to and educating the various segments of the community. Segments of the community will tend to stay segregated rather than assimilate into the community. The need to have the department mirror the community and the advantages of speaking other languages will be new challenges faced by the police executive.
- ◆ Changes in available resources will remain a concern as state and federal funding continues to be in question. User tax bonds are not popular in rural communities and local systems are adversarial to changing resource allocation. The police executive will need to seek and identify new and non-traditional resources. Tomorrow's rural police executive will need to have a broader perspective on community issues in order that there may be mutual benefit in the forming of community collaborations.
- ◆ The level of economic disparity between the social classes will continue to grow. From the police perspective, the challenge will be how the police department will open the lines of communication among and between the social classes. The problem of who can pay for police services versus those who cannot will need to be addressed.
- ◆ Court interference with management decision making will be an important issue for the police executive. Financial cutbacks will have significant impacts on the

courts and their ability to provide services to police departments. The courts tend to look from the position of rationality, which may be in conflict with police work that is not traditionally done perfectly or by the book. The passing of future state laws and mandates could impact the ability of the courts and the police departments to operate effectively.

- ◆ The level of change in societal values will be seen in a swing back to the things communities valued in the past. Rural communities will resist the negative influences of the urban cities and will protect their "quality of life."
- ◆ The level of rural police executive responsibilities will increase. Law enforcement may serve as a welfare institution for society, and may be asked to go beyond just protecting the people. Because of financial issues, tomorrow's rural police executive may become the director of more than one city or county department. The police executive in rural communities will be required to take a leadership role in social issues and have credibility within the agency as well as in the community.
- ◆ The level of technological advances will change the way rural police departments provide services. Organization restructures and diminishing resources will demand that the police executive look to technology for help.
- ◆ The level of public expectations of police accountability will increase. The information super-highway of the future will educate as well as expose what is occurring in law enforcement nationwide, good or bad, to the local community. Local law enforcement will be judged by what is occurring beyond

their city limits. A global perspective will be in order.

Leaders and futurists do not limit themselves to what has been done before; what was good enough last year will not be good enough for next year. There must be better ways to do "things" and those "things" must be identified before they can be addressed.⁸

THE NEW FACE OF POLICE LEADERSHIP

Irrespective of the size or location of the city, strikingly consistent themes emerge when elected and appointed officials describe the traits required in a police executive. They are looking for candidates with strong personal leadership skills and a community oriented policing philosophy. Cities want police executives at the forefront of modern law enforcement with a proven record of improving community relations. The ideal police executive of today and tomorrow is an exceptional manager of resources, accessible and responsive, an articulate public spokesperson, and an effective mediator of widely divergent points of view. Law enforcement professionals who aspire to wear the chief's badge should know to develop their skills and competencies.⁹

The question is, what specific skills or competencies will be needed in tomorrow's rural community? To many it will sound like a recurring theme about leadership. Increased responsibilities will require a higher level of proficiency in skills and abilities outside the traditional manager. Tomorrow's police executive will need to learn or acquire many of the following described leadership competencies in order to be effective:

- ◆ The ability to identify, access, and analyze information.
- ◆ The ability to understand and utilize advanced technology.
- ◆ The ability to develop effective unit or section teams.
- ◆ The ability to communicate a clear image of a desirable future (objectives and priorities).
- ◆ The ability to forecast, plan, and implement activities.
- ◆ The ability to communicate information and direction with individuals at all levels within the agency.
- ◆ The ability to inspire subordinates' thinking and the flexibility and courage to integrate paradigms.

Because of limited funding, the rural police organization provides minimal education, training or planning in preparation for meeting future challenges occurring at the local and regional levels. As police organizations and their community leaders are asked to develop and foster tomorrow's leadership they will need to develop a strategic plan and a new vision of the future.¹⁰

STRATEGIC PLAN

The creation of a future vision required further analysis and the development of scenarios. These scenarios (most desired, most likely, and worst case) were developed in an attempt to have a "glimpse of possible futures" for rural police leadership by the year 2006. The glimpse of the future ranged from police leaders who were incompetent and lacked the vision to meet tomorrow's challenges, putting the community at risk - to police leaders who were failing because of traditionalism

and isolationism and refusing to "change" and acquire new skills - to finally, an efficient and effective police leader who, because of departmental planning and professional training, acquired the necessary skills and leadership competencies to survive and be successful.

Based on the "most desirable" and, hopefully, attainable future scenario, the development of a strategic plan was necessary in order to move toward that future. Three alternative strategies were developed:

Strategy #1 - Create an Internal Career Development Program

The Internal Career Development Program is developed around the concept of developing internal personnel leadership competencies utilizing existing resources. This strategy will require the involvement and cooperation of all the stakeholders. These stakeholders will examine and assess the current and future needs of the department as well as the individual. The involvement of all stakeholders would result in the easy resolution of issues concerning selection, costs, training and individual development. The program is aimed at developing a more qualified police executive candidate who has broader leadership and executive skills.

Strategy #2 - State Mandated Accreditation for Police Executives

This strategy would require the State of California to mandate what training, skills and standards have to be met before one could attain the position of police executive. The elements of this strategy include establishing a criteria by which a police executive must successfully complete and maintain. Periodic recertification would be implemented to ensure measurable performance by all police executives.

Strategy #3 -Police Executive Academy Developed by POST

This strategy would require Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) to create a police executive academy. The successful completion of this academy would be required before an individual could be certified as a police executive. POST would establish what skills and competencies would be required in order to successfully complete the academy. Attendance in periodic advanced executive training sessions would be a component of this strategy.

SELECTED STRATEGY

After reviewing the alternative strategies, it was determined that all three have valuable aspects. Each of the three has components that are not only feasible and desirable, but have stakeholder support. Consideration was given to overall feasibility; stakeholder needs; costs; short and long-term benefits, and; the future anticipated leadership requirements of the rural police executive. The implementation of the selected strategy has wide application throughout law enforcement and can equally benefit small or large departments.

The strategic plan involves a systematic and comprehensive training program which includes, but is not limited to, training courses in the functions of the following offices: Personnel Management, Risk Management, Research and Development, Marketing, City Attorney's role, Community Planning and Development, Finance, Parks and Recreation, City Manager's Office, and Public Works.

For any plan to be accepted, effective, and ultimately successful, it must have a number of significant strengths which will assist the organization in achieving its

goals and objectives. The Internal Career Development program offers a number of strengths which would improve the overall effectiveness of the organization.

- ◆ Prepares department for the future.
- ◆ Improves the overall department effectiveness. Management development will improve overall efficiency of work effort City-wide. Expands management team's skills and abilities. Advanced and structured training improves their abilities to meet a wider range of situations and problems.
- ◆ Training program will establish professional and personal relationships (trust) throughout the City.
- ◆ Structured program promotes continued management learning concept.
- ◆ Reduces isolationism and broadens personal perspectives. Provides a City-wide organization view.
- ◆ Develops a team effort among City management personnel.
- ◆ Gives City management greater flexibility in use of City department managers.
- ◆ Internal candidates will be known and tested.

A well developed and structured Internal Career Development program will result in a City/police operation running more effectively and efficiently. A long term commitment creates a "win-win" situation both for the organization as well as the individual. In times of budget cuts, specifically to training programs, the need to identify existing resources becomes increasingly important. The need for additional and/or expanded training does not diminish because funds have. This strategy will

have a significant stakeholder appeal as it represents flexibility, cost savings, and strategic planning.

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

The investment in the future of any organization has to be made by everyone within and outside the organization. Virtually every City employee plays an important part in the development of tomorrow's leader. During the transition phase of any desired program, critical stakeholders will have a great deal of influence in promoting or negatively impacting its development. Those individuals or groups that have the greatest influence on the issue of the development of tomorrow's rural police executive have been referred to as the critical mass.

In most medium to small size cities, the critical mass impacting the implementation of a police executive development program are:

1. Police Executive
2. City Manager
3. Police Officers' Association
4. Command Staff (Captains)
5. Supervisors (Sergeants)
6. City Council
7. Media
8. Business Community
9. Minority Community
10. Other Law Enforcement Agencies

There are many ways to implement a preferred strategy within an organization. The key concern for an implementation plan is gaining the buy-in and/or ownership of all stakeholders for both the short-term and long-term benefits. The following is a sequence of steps which ensure the success of such a strategy. Those responsible for implementation would include: City Manager, Police Executive, Command Staff, Police Officers' Association and the Business Community.

Phase 1 - Gain Program Support

1. Assessment of department and community needs in terms of leadership and management competencies. All stakeholders are involved in the process. Communicate findings department-wide and seek feedback.
2. Obtain the support and buy-in of the City Manager and City Council. Analyze and determine needed funding sources. The coordination and cooperation of City departments will involve the City Manager's office.
3. The current police executive will play a critical role in the development and implementation of the program, both as a salesperson and a role model. Support of the program will be critical.
4. The Command Staff will share in the support of the program and will communicate the need for the desired program. The desired strategic plan will need to be developed with timelines and schedules. Decision as to who and when department personnel will receive the desired training will need to be made.
5. A meeting with the POA Board of Directors will need to take place in order

to forecast the desired direction of the department and to keep them involved in the decision making process.

6. There will be a need to conduct formal and informal meetings with department personnel to forecast the department's direction and to provide them with what the vision of the department will be.
7. Modification of the department recruitment efforts will need to be made. Criteria for selection of new employees will need to be re-examined with an emphasis on management and leadership qualities.
8. Department psychologist can assist in identifying potential candidates during the recruitment screening process.
9. The department training manager's role becomes a critical component of the career development program. Selection and status within the department may change; consideration may be given to hiring an outside civilian training manager. A career path training schedule for potential candidates will need to be designed and established.
10. The process of evaluating personnel on their performance will take on a more significant role. Forms will need to be modified to meet the needs of the program. Evaluators will need to be trained on the criteria for the program.
11. On-going assessment of department personnel strengths and weaknesses.
12. Work with the external stakeholders to inform and educate them regarding the program.

Phase 2 - Program Development

1. Steering committee and project manager are selected.
2. Program guidelines and objectives are established.
3. Selection of candidates is made.
4. Training dates and schedules are developed.

Phase 3 - Committee Recommendations

1. Flow chart is shared with City Manager and management staff.
2. Commencement date of program is established.
3. Solicit/select management candidates.
4. Evaluate, analyze, modify program.
5. Summary report to stakeholder.

CONCLUSIONS

The law enforcement community, and specifically rural communities, need effective police leadership as never before. Rural communities will need strong police leaders to deal with the dramatic increase in violent crime, the never ending drug problem, civil disturbances, growing demands for customer service (coupled with fewer resources), and the need to manage effectively in a time of extremely rapid economic, social, and cultural change. In order to meet these and other challenges, tomorrow's police leader must master a myriad of skills and techniques.

While the past is uncomplicated, predictable and understandable, thus providing a certain level of comfort, the uncertain future offers tremendous opportunity for innovation, ingenuity, and imagination. In preparation for the future, the rural police

leaders must redefine their function and role. Effective leadership and management of rural police departments will be seen in the form of: identifying new resources and proper use of existing ones; expanding of public services and functions; altering of economic and managerial philosophies, and; establishment of a clear organizational vision with the accompanying methodologies that will be used to achieve department goals. The future is not predetermined; rather, it can be influenced by individual and organizational choices.

The survival test for the rural police executive is in their ability to learn, adapt, and create change. Successfully meeting the challenges of tomorrow will be the result of the police executive understanding the chaotic and uncertain world which is developing. The challenge for rural police executives will be to seek new ways of learning new jobs and skills which will make them more efficient and effective. Tomorrow's police executive will need to view the goals of the organization not as the ends, but as a vision by which the future can be created.

ENDNOTES

1. Gary Brown and Leo Peart, *The Police Chief* (Western City, January 1981), p. 7.
2. A. Toffler, *The Adaptive Corporation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), p. 171.
3. R. Rose, "The Administrators of the Future," *Police Chief*, October 1995, p. 96.
4. A. Toffler and H. Toffler, "The Future of Law Enforcement Dangerous and Different," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, January 1990, pp. 2 - 5.
5. A. Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).
6. J. Campbell, "Future Research: Here and Abroad," *Police Chief*, January 1990, pp. 30 - 34.
7. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper and Row, Inc. 1985), p. 4.
8. R. Rose, "The Administrators of the Future," *Police Chief*, October 1995, p. 97.
9. Ralph Anderson and Associates, *Trends in Executive Search* (Ralph Anderson & Associates, Sacramento, October 1995), p. 2.
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